DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 756 RC 021 987

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TITLE	Evaluation of Quest High School Network Inquiry into Improvement Conference, October 1997.
INSTITUTION	Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, WV.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-04-00
NOTE	29p.
CONTRACT	RJ96006001
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Change Agents; Change Strategies; Collegiality; *Educational Change; Educational Cooperation; High Schools; *Interschool Communication; Listservs; *Networks; Parent Participation; Program Evaluation; *Regional Cooperation
IDENTIFIERS	*School Improvement Teams

ABSTRACT

As part of its contract to develop a framework for continuous school improvement in its four-state region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia), Appalachia Educational Laboratory staff designed the Quest project. Based upon principles of inquiry, collaboration, and action research, Quest supports and investigates ongoing school improvement efforts through conferences, visits to participating schools, communication via listserv and mailings, and the creation of a Quest network of schools. The first network conference was held October 5-7, 1997, in Roanoke, Virginia. Teams consisting of students, teachers, parents, and administrators from each of nine high schools attended, for a total of 36 participants. Evaluation data were generated by participant observation, unstructured interviews, quantitative and qualitative feedback forms, and follow-up forms. Data indicate that the conference's six goals--connect with colleagues, create a learning community, connect with concepts related to continuous school improvement, create personal and shared meaning, commit to continue learning with this community, and commit to continue the Quest back home--were successfully achieved, in spite of some participant discomfort with the Quest approach. Follow-up data suggest that Quest had prompted discussions within some schools concerning improvement strategies, and some schools instituted small school-improvement projects. The Quest listserv was not used by many participants. Recommendations are made for improving future conferences. Three appendices present feedback and follow-up forms and the evaluation standards checklist. (Author/TD)

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Evaluation of QUEST High School Network Inquiry into Improvement Conference, October 1997

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Evaluation of QUEST High School Network Inquiry into Improvement Conference, October 1997

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RC 021987

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This publication is based on work sponsored wholly or in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education, under contract number RJ96006001. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U. S. Government.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its contract to develop a framework for continuous school improvement in its four-state Region, Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) staff designed the QUEST project. Based upon principles of inquiry, collaboration, and action research, QUEST proposes to support and investigate ongoing school improvement efforts through biannual conferences, visits to participating schools, communication via listserv and mailings, and the creation of a QUEST network of schools. The first network conference was held October 5 -7, 1997, in Roanoke, Virginia, for selected high schools within AEL's Region. One team from each of nine high schools attended the conference in Roanoke; three of the nine schools were preparing to consolidate in the next year to form one school. These teams consisted of students, teachers, and parents, as well as school administrators, and ranged in size from one person (from one of the schools slated to consolidate) to nine people. A total of 36 participants attended the conference.

The conference was evaluated in terms of whether and to what extent the conference goals were met. To this end, a variety of data were gathered: fieldnotes were taken as the evaluator engaged in participant observation of all conference activities; participants completed two written feedback forms, one quantitative conference evaluation form, and one written follow-up form distributed at the following high school conference in February, 1998; and unstructured interviews were conducted throughout the conference. The follow-up questionnaire also enabled assessment of the impact QUEST had upon participating schools.

Analysis of the data indicates that participants enjoyed very much the opportunity to discuss school improvement with a variety of colleagues. However, they expressed some impatience with processes of inquiry central to the QUEST philosophy. Rather, participants wanted to consider concrete strategies for school improvement immediately. The achievement of the goal of connecting with concepts related to continuous school improvement received the lowest mean rating. Relatedly, attendees reported thinking that the QUEST Framework for Continuous Improvement had not been adequately explicated. In general, however, participants rated the achievement of conference goals highly and reported finding the conference useful and informative. Follow-up data suggest that QUEST had prompted discussions within some of the schools concerning improvement strategies, while other schools instituted what might be considered small school improvement projects. The QUEST listserv was not used by many participants.

Based upon the data, the evaluator concluded that the QUEST conference for high schools successfully achieved its six goals, in spite of some participant discomfort with the QUEST approach. Recommendations included making the Framework for Continuous Improvement more central in furture conferences in order to enhance participants' connection with concepts related to continuous school improvment. Other recommendations were that QUEST staff address attendees' concerns about the utility of inquiry to school improvement and that ongoing efforts be made to improve communication within the network.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1996, QUEST staff at the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) began their work with teams from school communities in three West Virginia counties. Their aim was to invigorate efforts for continuous school improvement, using a variety of techniques for gathering input from all those with a stake in their local schools. This first "learning community," called Leadership to Unify School Improvement Efforts (LUSIE), was composed of school teams including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Ultimately, this group wrote individual school visions and improvement plans, as well as co-authored *Creating Energy for School Improvement* (1997), a supplemental guide for those poised to write their own state-mandated school improvement plans.

QUEST staff also desired to create learning communities devoted to exploring continuous school improvement across the AEL Region. Hence, staff designed a pilot Inquiry into Improvement conference in April 1997 for selected high schools in AEL's four-state Region. In October 1997, another conference was held for selected high schools, this time with an explicit emphasis on forming and nurturing a network of schools. This report summarizes the evaluation of the second high school conference.

Convened in Roanoke, Virginia, from October 5 to 7, the second Inquiry into Improvement conference sought to bring together teams from various high schools concerned with bettering their schools in an ongoing manner. These schools were recommended to QUEST by district office staff or were chosen based upon their earlier involvement with other AEL projects. Ultimately, nine schools elected to participate in the QUEST network. One team from each of the nine schools attended the rally in Roanoke; three of the nine schools were preparing to consolidate in the next year to form one school. These teams consisted of students, teachers, and parents, as well as school administrators, and ranged in size from one person (from one of the schools slated to consolidate) to nine people. A total of 36 participants attended the conference.

The conference began with a welcome from the facilitators to the participants, after which participants engaged in several activities meant to foster connection with colleagues from across the Region as they began their "journey" toward continuous improvement. The inquiry groups, made up of participants from different schools, states, and role groups, sat at round tables. On each table were purple name placards; colorful wooden windcatchers; pots of yellow mums; containers of markers, pens, tape, and other supplies; and a large QUEST three-ring binder containing essays and resources on school improvement for each participant. Staff had placed posters of quotes pertinent to continuous improvement around the perimeter of the room, as well as several tables filled with books and extra supplies to the side. Participants were dressed, for the most part, in work clothes; by the next day, many had gone casual.

The facilitators introduced a variety of activities to foster discussion, including several adapted from FutureSearch, a process for enabling group decision-making. "Understanding Who We Are" asked participants to write experiences or events they thought were significant on three large timelines covering 1970 to the present. The first dealt with personal experiences, the second

with global happenings, and the third with local school community events. After the timelines were completed, attendees then analyzed each for trends and themes. The "Mind Map" process asked participants to create a visual representation of what issues and phenomena they felt most impacted their efforts to improve teaching and learning. "Prouds and Sorries" was an activity in which people listed things they had done at their schools of which they were most proud and most sorry. Finally, heterogenous inquiry groups, based upon their earlier discussions about indicators of ongoing improvement, put together skits and creative presentations of what a continuously improving school might look like to a visitor. These and other activities, including reflective writing in participant logs and school team meetings, offered conference attendees a variety of experiences and tools with which to consider continuous school improvement.

The primary audience for this report is QUEST staff. It is intended to help inform their decisions about future conferences and the development of the QUEST network. In addition, this report is part of an ongoing series of reports about each QUEST event. As such, it will contribute to documenting the process whereby QUEST staff attempt to enable continuous school improvement. A secondary audience might include those who are concerned about how best to facilitate a network for school improvement.

The purpose of this report is to assess whether, and to what extent, conference goals were met. In addition, this report discusses the ways in which the October 1997 high school conference compared to the pilot conference, as part of the ongoing documentation of QUEST network development. And finally, the report attends to participants' assessments of the impact the conference had upon their schools, their QUEST teams, and their individual understandings of continuous school improvement.

METHODOLOGY

The methods used for this evaluation component of the QUEST project were primarily qualitative. During the conference, the evaluator engaged in participant observation (Becker and Geer 1957; Emerson 1983; Glazer 1972; Miles and Huberman 1994), a method highly suited "for studying processes, relationships among people and events, the organization of people and events, continuities over time, and patterns" (Jorgensen 1989, p.12). Furthermore, consistent with the QUEST paradigm, participant observation involves "a flexible, open-ended, opportunistic process and logic of inquiry through which what is studied constantly is subject to redefinition based on field experience and observation" (Jorgensen 1989, p.23). This method "is a commitment to adopt the perspective of those studied by sharing in their....experiences" (Denzin 1989, p.156), thereby enabling researchers to better evaluate how an event or process appears and feels to participants.

During this conference, the evaluator played a role more akin to what Denzin typifies as "observer as participant" (1989) rather than as a complete participant observer. That is, the evaluator's contact with conference attendees was not as a participant in the activities in which they were engaged, but instead as a roaming onlooker and occasional conversationalist. The evaluator shared breakfast and lunch with participants, sat in on their group endeavors, watched the large group as the conference unfolded, and took advantage of serendipitous occasions to chat.

Unstructured interviews were also conducted during the course of each rally. As opportunities arose for relatively private conversation, participants were asked to discuss their assessments of the rally generally and of the achievement of rally goals specifically. Interview responses were later categorized and analyzed by theme.

In order to corroborate the theses generated by participant observation, the evaluator also analyzed data from the feedback forms designed by QUEST staff soliciting participant assessment of the process. Two forms sought written responses, while a third asked respondents to rate, using a Likert-type scale, how successfully they felt conference goals had been achieved (see Appendix A). The scale was constructed such that a rating of "5" indicated that the goal under consideration had been met "extremely well," while a rating of "1"corresponded with an assessment that the goal had been "not well accomplished." This form was intended to generate quantitative data to enrich the primarily qualitative data gathered during the conference.

Finally, participants who attended the Roanoke conference were asked to respond to a one-page follow-up form (see Appendix B) prior to the beginning of the third high school QUEST conference, held February 8-10, 1998, at Pipestem State Park, near Bluefield, West Virginia. The follow-up questionnaire asked participants three open-ended questions about what they had learned from the earlier conference, what their school or QUEST team had accomplished since, and what impact the network listserv had on them. Of the original 36 participants, 16 returned to the Pipestem conference. Of these 16, nine responded to the three follow-up questions about the earlier conference.

Using several data sources in order to corroborate theses is what Brewer and Hunter (1989) call "multimethod research" or "triangulation." This approach posits that the strengths of each method will make up for the weaknesses in the others, ultimately providing a more complete account of that being studied. Hence, this evaluation utilizes data generated by participant observation, unstructured interviews, quantitative feedback forms, and qualitative feedback and follow-up forms. All of the evaluation activities were conducted by one evaluator.

FINDINGS

Comparative Findings

In this section, several differences between the pilot Inquiry into Improvement Conference for high schools (held in April 1997) and the second conference for selected high schools (held in October 1997) will be described. First, the second meeting did not focus on the general theme of storytelling as had the earlier meeting. Instead, QUEST facilitators concentrated exclusively on continuous school improvement as the conceptual impetus for the conference.

Second, QUEST staff made much more clear to participants at the second conference that the process would require commitment, both to continue the QUEST back at their own school and to continue learning with the community created in Roanoke. Facilitators achieved this in several ways, including revising the list of QUEST goals to encompass both aspects of commitment, offering concrete suggestions for activities participants might undertake once back at their schools, and referring often to the next conference planned for the group.

Finally, the participants at this meeting appeared to be more focused on the process of effecting ongoing school change. Many, though not all, attendees conveyed a sense of urgency at times about the state of their schools, as well as a willingness to "do my part to make this fly" by "forging ahead," "improving my school one classroom and one teacher and one student and one parent and one event at a time," "following through with the project," and "keeping up with this work and coming back in Feb[ruary]."

Goals

This section will explore how well the October conference achieved the six QUEST goals. The findings are based upon participant observations, impromptu interviews, feedback forms, and a brief quantitative assessment of whether the conference goals were met. This quantitative feedback suggested that participants were highly satisfied that the goals had been met; the lowest mean was 4.36 on a five-point scale. Of the 36 attendees, 28 returned their quantitative evaluations, a return rate of nearly 78%. Thirty-four participants (94%) completed the qualitative feedback form distributed after the first day of the conference, while 29 participants (81%) returned the final qualitative evaluation form.

Goal 1: Connect with Colleagues

According to participant responses on the Likert-type scale, ranging from "5" (indicating the goal was met "extremely well") to "1" (meaning the goal was "not well accomplished"), the goal of connecting with colleagues was the most successfully achieved. With a mean of 4.64, participants

overwhelmingly felt that they had important interactions with colleagues from across the Region. This item also had the lowest standard deviation, .62, indicating that participants' reactions were highly congruent (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Rating of the Achievement of Conference Goals

	Mean	SD*	N
Goal One: Connect with Colleagues	4.64	.62	28
Goal Two: Create a Learning Community	4.46	.79	28
Goal Three: Connect with Concepts Related to School Improvement	4.36	.78	28
Goal Four: Create Personal and Shared Meaning	4.41	.69	27
Goal Five: Commit to Continue Learning with this Community	4.57	.63	28
Goal Six: Commit to Continue The QUEST Back Home	4.46	.69	28

*Standard Deviation

Likewise, during the conference, attendees spontaneously offered expressions of their connection with one another in inquiry groups. "This is a really great group!" one participant offered after a small group activity. "Great diversity!" added another. At the end of the conference, as the heterogenous teams constructed by the facilitators disbanded, an attendee noted that she had "met some real special people." Another team so connected with each other, they asked one of the facilitators if perhaps they could continue as a team during the next conference.

Participants also wrote on their feedback forms about connecting with colleagues. In response to the prompt "I connected with...," attendees said they connected with "a lot of other teachers," "new friends," "people who point out realities," "excellent teachers and their ideas," and "so many wonderful people."

Goal 2: Create a Learning Community

In response to the second questionnaire item, attendees expressed their feeling that a learning community had been formed successfully. The mean for this question was 4.46, with a standard deviation of .79 (see Table 1). Likewise, as one person wrote, "[I was personally renewed by...]

meeting with school folks from other states to work on an important project," suggesting he felt that a variety of people had come together successfully to accomplish a common aim.

During conference activities, participants showed indications of feeling communally towards each other. They engaged energetically in projects and in small groups, debated issues in the larger group, shared stories, and pondered the state of their schools together. Some felt so pleased with the ethos of the conference, they volunteered on the first day, "We're already committed!"

Another indication that community was created was the level of dissent tolerated by the larger group. During a discussion of the timelines created by the group, students and teachers spontaneously debated the meaning of "peace." Each group had quite different perspectives but recognized the validity of the other's perceptions. Ultimately, though no resolve was reached, both better understood why peace could be so disparately defined. In addition, attendees expressed greater tolerance of each other as the conference progressed. As one person put it, "Any way to stop the off-the-subject comments? I really minded them yesterday but actually found them non-annoying today."

Still, some people were unable to shed their impatience, wishing facilitators would "not allow people to yack so much." Another attendee wrote, "Sad to say I saw one teacher being disrespectful to a student."

Participants also communicated their sense of being in a safe environment that nurtured expression and thought. For instance: "The concern seemed to be genuine by all present," "I felt comfortable to share anytime I wanted," "Nice atmosphere--Do not feel intimidated," and "Thoughts that involuntarily came out were spontaneous reactions. Symbolic of trust and sincere efforts in our endeavors for school improvement." Another attendee wrote, "I have contributed more in these groups than I ever have."

Goal 3: Connect with Concepts Related to Continuous School Improvement

This goal received the lowest mean rating by participants: 4.36, with a standard deviation of .78 (see Table 1). Nonetheless, the mean is above 4, indicating that attendees felt that the goal of connecting with concepts of continuous school improvement had been achieved well.

Insights gained from participant observation and interviews corroborate the data generated from the questionnaire. Attendees expressed impatience at times to be given skills, methods, and solutions for the immediate betterment of their schools. Asked at lunch during the second day how he felt about the conference thus far, one principal answered, "I'm just waiting to see what happens. It's interesting-- people have so many ideas--but how do we actually *do* some of these things?"

Similarly, the facilitators several times throughout the conference had to refocus participant attention on "coming from a place of genuine not-knowing." That is, participants were eager to find

instant answers and found it difficult or unproductive--or simply beyond their everyday experience--to consider their quandaries in depth. Early in the conference, two attendees began discussing with the larger group what they saw as a desperate need for life-skills courses in schools. They might have continued longer if the facilitators had not asked them to please refrain and instead give themselves up for the moment to uncertainty and inquiry.

Attendees' written reflections on feedback forms likewise indicate an impatience with inquiry and reflection activities. For example, one respondent wrote, "Can't wait to get to 'solution' and 'implementation' time," while another said, "I want *solutions* or at least *suggestions*." Another participant wrote a lengthy comment about this: "Need to be flexible when questions about a topic ignite lots of discussion. Some of us wanted more concrete solutions or strategies for problems. Like--we discussed storytelling as a positive but never came back to it. We talked about using this for school boards but [were] not allowed to discuss it at length."

Still, participants reported finding the various techniques and concepts used during the conference to be helpful and potentially useful in their schools. Of the activities adapted from Future Search, attendees said: "These tools will transfer nicely to our local schools," "These were great! We intend to use them in our QUEST," and "Hearing, seeing, doing made learning more cemented." Of the Framework for Continuous Improvement, attendees wrote: "Very beneficial," "Provides a reference point to start with and continuously work around the circle," "The six constructs gave me a framework as I would like to go about improving my school," "Great ideas to take back," and "I fully understand what you were trying to relate."

Participants also had some critiques of the Framework, however, writing "This was rather nebulous because it wasn't continually referred to," and "We needed more time [to discuss the Framework]."

Other concepts were salient to participants, especially the notion that "failure is not an option" as portrayed in the video clip from *Apollo 13*. As one person put it, "I liked the visual *Apollo 13*--it reminds us that this can be created everyday and is attainable."

Participants also gleaned insights from serendipitous interactions. The following exchange was overheard between two administrators:

> *Wouldn't it be neat if students went through something like this--just students? I thought it was so great that that one student was talking about [a summer institute sponsored by an SEA to involve students in thinking about how to improve schools]. She said "<u>We</u> can improve our school." And I thought "A-ha!"*
> *Yeah, it's the ownership that's so key.*

Two teachers had the following conversation about the techniques used during the conference:

> *Isn't it amazing how creative people can be?*
> *And with so little time.*
> *Students can be too.*

The teachers then continued with a brief discussion of some of the methods they considered incorporating into their classes.

Goal 4: Create Personal and Shared Meaning

With a mean of 4.41, and a standard deviation of .69, conference attendees appeared to feel that the goal of creating personal and shared meaning had been well accomplished (see Table 1).

One participant reflected that the substance of the conference was congruent with her/his own perspective on schooling, writing, "Many things we talked about (strategies, ways of analyzing problems) are things I already do. This day's activities reinforced and refined a lot of my educational philosophy." Another attendee wrote that s/he had learned, "that I need to take responsibility for leadership and not complain or use the excuse we have 'lack of leadership.'" These quotes suggest that participants were actively making sense of the conference activities.

In terms of shared meaning, many attendees expressed their pleasure at meeting colleagues and sharing ideas, stories, and thoughts. In addition, many wrote that their experiences with small group work had been especially helpful since such forums allowed for "meaningful exchanges," for instance. Participants also reported that home teams enabled the various team members to come together, after several activities apart, invigorated and with new ideas to share.

Goal 5: Commit to Continue Learning with This Community

Participants expressed their sense that the goal of committing to continue learning with the conference community had been well accomplished. The mean score for this goal was 4.57; the standard deviation was .63 (see Table 1).

Attendees also offered spontaneous expression of their commitment during the conference. "We're already committed!" one woman offered during a large group presentation early in the meeting. Participants also referred to the next scheduled QUEST conference in their conversations, indicating that they were planning to attend and continue their work together.

And participants wrote of their commitment on feedback forms. One wrote, "[I am committed to...] keeping up this work and coming back in Feb[ruary]." Another offered her

commitment to "following through with this project." Still another noted that "we are all going to make this work. I am excited to begin work in my school, but to also see how others progress."

Goal 6: Commit to Continue the QUEST Back Home

With a mean score of 4.46, and a standard deviation of .69, conference participants seemed to think that the goal of committing to continue their QUEST back at their schools had been well achieved.

Participants further evinced their commitment to continue improvement efforts in their own schools during their conversations. For instance, one administrator suggested to her staff, "We need to be thinking what things [i.e., processes for continuous school improvement] we like and might want to take back with us."

In reaction to the feedback form prompt "I am committed to...", nearly all attendees wrote of hopes to improve their schools upon their return. Some responses included "[I am committed to...] go back home and help my school," *"improving* myself and my school!," "making our faculty commit," "improving school for all students," "helping make our school 'Utopia School' and getting others excited about it also," and "creating a community within our school." Still others included "improving my school, improving myself as a teacher, and making every attempt to make our QUEST successful," and "going back home and really get everyone to see the QUEST concept and that we can make it work."

Follow-Up

A third high school QUEST conference was held February 8-10, 1998, at Pipestem State Park near Bluefield, West Virginia. Just prior to the beginning of this conference, participants were asked to respond to a follow-up questionnaire querying them about what they had learned and done as a result of the conference in Roanoke. The form also contained questions about participant access to and experience with the QUEST listserv, as well as a question concerning respondent expectations for the upcoming conference.

One team from each of seven schools participated in the third QUEST conference; five schools had been involved in the October 1997 rally for high schools, while the remaining two schools were new to QUEST. An eighth school had planned to attend, but severe weather prohibited their participation. Of the 36 attendees in Roanoke, 16 returned to the third conference in Pipestem. Of these 16, nine responded to the follow-up questions about the impact of the earlier conference.

The first follow-up question asked participants to describe what, if anything, they had learned from the previous conference. Such a question was intended to assess the impact of the Roanoke conference on an individual level. Seven respondents wrote that they had learned something of other

education stakeholders' perspectives and then had learned how to think collaboratively about school improvement. One respondent put it this way: "School improvement must be a shared effort encompassing students, teachers, administration and community." One participant gained a different insight: "Learning and growth start from within. People who are responsible for their own development will make significant gains." Another respondent said, simply, "I got several ideas to try to improve my school."

The follow-up form also asked participants to describe what, if anything, they or their QUEST teams had done as a result of participating in the earlier conference. This question was designed to assess the impact the Roanoke conference had at the school level. Five respondents wrote that discussions or meetings had been held at their schools in order to discuss either the QUEST framework or school improvement generally. One participant described a "school improvement activity begun to improve school signage." Two respondents referred to having instituted a student recognition project and an-after school tutoring program. Another wrote that his school had "provided more community projects....between the school and community."

Only six of the 16 returning QUEST participants reported being a part of the QUEST listserv. However, eight respondents answered the query about the impact of the listserv. Four respondents wrote that the listserv had offered them support and information. For instance, one attendee wrote, "It has given me a new perspective as to what is going on in other schools," while another felt that the listserv had enabled her to "become closer to [the other participants] by learning more about them." Two participants reported that colleagues at their schools had sent them copies of listserv mail or had kept them abreast of discussions on the listserv. The remaining two respondents described the listserv as either irrelevant to them or inaccessible.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

QUEST participants found the conference to be an opportunity to discuss education issues with colleagues from a variety of contexts in the four-state Region. Attendees expressed pleasure at meeting "new friends" and "so many wonderful people." Indeed, the goal of connecting with colleagues received the highest mean rating in terms of how well it had been achieved.

Some attendees reported that the Framework for Continuous Improvement and other concepts related to continuous school improvement were not sufficiently explicated. For instance, one participant wrote that the Framework "wasn't continually referred to," implying that he would have gained more had it been more fully integrated into conference activities.

Other participants reported wanting, for instance, "to get to 'solution' and 'implementation' time." This and other similar reports suggest that some attendees would have preferred to have discussed simple, concrete methods for improving schools rather than exploring school improvement in depth and in the abstract.

Relatedly, several attendees praised the data-gathering techniques adapted from FutureSearch, noting that they intended to use such methods back at their schools. Such praise reflects their concern with action.

Despite their critiques regarding the utility of reflection and inquiry, participants reported feeling committed to continually improving their schools and to continuing their involvement with QUEST.

In terms of the impact of the conference in Roanoke, those participants who attended the following conference in 1998 reported that they had at least been prompted to begin discussions within their school communities about continuous improvement. A few others described the institution of what might be regarded as small school improvement programs.

The listserv appeared to have limited impact on participants. Only six reported being a part of the listserv. While four found it to be useful, the remainder were less enthusiastic about its relevance.

Recommendations

Based upon data gathered by participant observation, informal interviews, and feedback forms, the following recommendations are made:

First, staff might have made the Framework for Continuous Improvement more of a conceptual focus for conference activities. While the notions informing the Framework may have been incorporated into the meeting, several participants suggested that they would have learned more had such notions been made explicit.

Second, the necessity for inquiry and reflection to inform school improvement efforts could have been asserted for the benefit of those who reported feeling impatient to receive concrete solutions to their problems. In other words, the philosophy guiding QUEST could have been compared to more pragmatic philosophies, highlighting the assumptions behind QUEST activities and making the case for reflection and deliberation.

Third, given attendees' perceptions that working with small groups was meaningful, staff could continue to structure these opportunities for participants. At the same time, attendees also noted their personal insights gained from conference activities. Hence, staff could continue structuring opportunities for participants to learn and reflect both within groups and on their own.

Fourth, in order to nurture and sustain attendees' commitment to the QUEST endeavor, at school and with the network, staff should continue communicating with attendees, discussing upcoming events, and offering support. Staff have already addressed this recommendation in several ways, with the initiation of a listserv for network members with Internet access and with several mailings regarding upcoming events. Relatedly, however, the listserv appears not to address all participants' needs for communication. For those who do have Internet access, perhaps a virtual "pen pal" system could be established to facilitate Internet communication among QUEST members. For those who do not have access to the Internet, perhaps QUEST staff could send paper copies of listserv activity and arrange for a paper "pen pal" system as well.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Feedback Forms

Inquiry Into Improvment
Feedback Form

The conference planners would appreciate your comments based upon the first day's experience.

Learnings, insights, ah-ha's from the day...

Things that worked especially well for me...

Ways in which I contributed...

Things that would have allowed me to contribute more...

Things I want to explore further...

Things to trash...

Other comments:

Inquiry Into Improvment

Please give us your feedback about the conference. In the top four boxes, we are asking for your reaction to four different experiences offered at the conference. How did the following "work" for you:

Inquiry group?	Storytelling as a Learning Tool?
School stories?	Home school team meetings?

In the bottom four boxes, we invite your comments to the following prompts:

I was personally renewed by...	My curiousity was piqued about...
I connected with...	I am committed to...

Use the back side of this paper to write other comments.

QUEST: Inquiry Into Improvement

Please help us assess the learning experience for you by completing the following items.

I. Circle the number that best represents your thinking about the extent to which each of the following six goals were accomplished.

5 = Extremely well 3 = Average 1 = Not well accomplished

Goal 1: ***Connect*** with colleagues	5	4	3	2	1
Goal 2: ***Create*** a learning community	5	4	3	2	1
Goal 3: ***Connect*** with concepts related to continuous school improvement	5	4	3	2	1
Goal 4: ***Create*** personal and shared meaning	5	4	3	2	1
Goal 5: ***Commit*** to continue learning with this community	5	4	3	2	1
Goal 6: ***Commit*** to continue the QUEST back home	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B:

Follow-Up Form

Pre-Conference Questionnaire
QUEST High School Network
Pipestem State Park * Bluefield, WV
February 8 -10, 1998

1. How many QUEST conferences/activities/rallies have you attended to date? _____

2. If you attended the Roanoke QUEST conference/rally, what, if anything, did you learn from it? _____

3. If you attended the Roanoke QUEST conference/rally, what, if anything, have you or your QUEST team done as a result of participating? _____

4. Do you have access to the Internet? Yes___ No___

If yes, have you been a part of the QUEST electronic listserv? Yes___ No___

If yes, in what ways, if at all, has the listserv affected you? _____

If no, would you like to participate on the electronic listserv? (Participation means that you could receive and send messages to other QUEST network members.) Yes___ No___

If yes, please provide your E-mail address. _____

5. As you think about the journey of continuous improvement in your school, what do you hope for from this QUEST rally? _____

Appendix C:

Completed Evaluation *Standards* Checklist

Citation Form

The Program Evaluation Standards (1994, Sage) guided the development of this (check one):

_____ request for evaluation plan/design/proposal
_____ evaluation plan/design/proposal
_____ evaluation contract
_X_ evaluation report
_____ other: _____

To interpret the information provided on this form, the reader needs to refer to the full text of the standards as they appear in Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, *The Program Evaluation Standards* (1994), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

The *Standards* were consulted and used as indicated in the table below (check as appropriate):

Descriptor		The Standard was deemed applicable and to the extent feasible was taken into account.	The Standard was deemed applicable but could not be taken into account.	The Standard was not deemed applicable.	Exception was taken to the Standard.
U1	Stakeholder Identification	X			
U2	Evaluator Credibility			X	
U3	Information Scope and Selection	X			
U4	Values Identification	X			
U5	Report Clarity	X			
U6	Report Timeliness and Dissemination	X			
U7	Evaluation Impact	X			
F1	Practical Procedures	X			
F2	Political Viability			X	
F3	Cost Effectiveness	X			
P1	Service Orientation	X			
P2	Formal Agreements	X			
P3	Rights of Human Subjects	X			
P4	Human Interactions	X			
P5	Complete and Fair Assessment	X			
P6	Disclosure of Findings	X			
P7	Conflict of Interest	X			
P8	Fiscal Responsibility	X			
A1	Program Documentation	X			
A2	Context Analysis	X			
A3	Described Purposes and Procedures	X			
A4	Defensible Information Sources	X			
A5	Valid Information	X			
A6	Reliable Information	X			
A7	Systematic Information	X			
A8	Analysis of Quantitative Information	X			
A9	Analysis of Qualitative Information	X			
A10	Justified Conclusions	X			
A11	Impartial Reporting	X			
A12	Metaevaluation	X			

Name Caitlin Howley-Rowe Date: 2/20/98
(typed) Caitlin Howley-Rowe
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Relation to Document: Author
(e.g., author of document, evaluation team leader, external auditor, internal auditor)